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CIVILIAN LIAISON OFFICERS HELP V CORPS TASK FORCE BUILD IRAQI POLICE FORCE IN BAYJI

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Task Force 1st Battalion, 7th Field Artillery, 1st Infantry Division

BAYJI, Iraq -- While Soldiers' training and equipment allows them to maintain security by force in the short term when necessary, the best and most effective long term solution in Iraq is acknowledged to be turning responsibility for security over to trained, equipped, and ready Iraqi security forces.



SGT ROLAND G. WALTERS

Butch Corcoran, a contracted international police liaison officer and trainer (left) and Soldiers from V Corps C Company, Task Force 1st Battalion, 7th Field Artillery, conduct pistol marksmanship training for the Bayji (Iraq) police.

Coalition Soldiers here have spent a great deal of time training Iraqi National Guard members, police work and training of the Iraqi National Police has proved more difficult. While the Army's military police officers are better trained for such specialized work, there are many missions vying for support of the limited number of MPs here.

One way coalition Forces are countering this difficulty is by using contracted civilian International Police Liaison Officers, a solution that has worked in areas such as Bosnia and Kosovo. Working closely with the Soldiers of the 1st Infantry Division's Task Force 1st Battalion, 7th Field Artillery, the IPLOs here provide additional

expertise and are helping the Bayji and Sharqat police force to become more capable, professional law enforcement agencies.

Phil Statler is the leader of the task force's IPLO team. A policeman in Clifton, Illinois for 20 years before becoming an international police trainer, Statler previously spent two years as a local police station coordinator in Kosovo before coming to Iraq.

Iraq presents some special challenges for Statler and his team. In Kosovo they could move around with relative freedom, but security threats here make their ability to move between stations more difficult.

Still, the IPLOs here have completed a variety of training programs so far, including classroom training on the basics of police work and 9mm pistol training. They also helped on a project to provide new police radios to local law enforcers.

Their IPLOs have recently focused on "train the trainer" instruction on such individual police skills as conducting searches of people and vehicles; countering force protection threats, and operating traffic control points. They have also carried out training with police leaders and trainers on tasks such as establishing patrol distribution plans and managing duty rosters.

The liaison officers have also spent a good deal of time and effort assessing station, police unit, and equipment capabilities.

Built from the ground up last year with a limited number of experienced police officers in their ranks, the Iraqi National Police are enduring the understandable growing pains. Difficulties with communications, varying levels of experience, and

geographic challenges give the INP a limited ability to “see itself.” While this makes Statler’s work more challenging, it also means that his team’s efforts should ultimately allow the INP to make its own informed managerial decisions.

The IPLOs also face the challenges that come with observing the social protocols of the Middle Eastern culture. For instance, the officers must remain aware of social requirements for observance and deference to rank and seniority -- especially important in Middle Eastern culture -- to avoid inadvertent insults.

But Statler says the greatest challenge he faces is in getting INP members to communicate both “vertically and horizontally” to increase coordination within each police station as well as between police units and stations. Many of the members of the current police force came from Saddam Hussein’s military forces -- a fact that is both help and hindrance in police work.

For example, many policemen who were high-ranking military members in Saddam’s forces tend to regard junior policemen as “servants and chauffeurs, and for a cop to think like that” is just not helpful, Statler said. The IPLOs are slowly getting the INP to see that they are “all on the same team,” he added.

Along with the Iraqi National Guard and New Iraqi Army, the INP -- and by extension the IPLOs -- is one of the coalition’s most important tools for rebuilding Iraq, officials say. The ability to turn over responsibilities for security to Iraqi forces is essential to making the country safe and building the stability necessary for the planned upcoming elections.

"The ILPOs (each) bring a career's worth of experiences to the theater, which is perfect for their mission at hand ... to assess, develop, and assist in the training of the INP, so that they can perform their security duties without coalition involvement," said Lt. Col. Kyle McClelland, Task Force 1-7 commander.

"Phil and his team are a definite combat multiplier in sector. This can be a very frustrating job for many reasons ... but they are professional, focused, determined and diligent in their efforts to make the INP successful."

